

“No one knows what the body can do.”

- Spinoza

“The world is frozen now.

It glitters, sparkles and shines.”

- Codeine, The White Birch, “*Smoking Room*”

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### **The Un-common of the Common: Bio/politics, Bio/networks, Bio/rebellions and Bio/aesthetics**

#### **Contemporary Critical Issues (4 units)**

**VIS 201 Tu 3:30p - 6:20p VAF 366**

**Professor Ricardo Dominguez**

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What can post-contemporary bodies do now? What un-common gestures can be made in the emerging “common/ism” that Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt call for in their book *Commonwealth* (2009) and how does their reading of “biopolitics” shift or add to the currents of art practices in the cold world of late-capital’s e/affective labor. The ‘common’ is an idea that evolved from the ‘commons’, and is posited to indicate a general participatory realm of open-commonality, but has also become commonality-as-commodity that now includes all aspects of life (bios) from cells to relationships, to what we hate and enjoy, from our iPad to our death, even our dreams are part of bio/capital now, with its new distributed banalities and its deadly sheen – (what forms of life <math>\diamond</math> art can become the un-common of this common?) – could it be the slow-core power of ‘love’? We will call on the demons and angels of critical theory to put a spell on this “bios” of power and potentiality, on its enigmas and thanatopolitical screams, on its dejections and militancy, and most importantly on the anonymous materials of our aesthetics. We will be reading essays by Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Negri and Hardt, Paolo Virno, Judith Butler, Amy Sara Carroll, and Steven Shaviro; viewing films, such as *Blade Runner*, *Gamer*, and *Punishment Park*; art works by Teresa Margolles, *Ubermorgen*, Sophie Calle, Carsten Holler, *Superflux*, Jose Antonio Vega Macotella and beyond.

#### **Expectations and Assignments for Every Class:**

- A) *Two to Three Presenters* will offer a shared reading of the text to be presented that week.**
- B) Bring in an *image/short clip etc.*, of a work of art that reflects that weeks reading for you – each of you.**
- C) *Share* other readings, films, gestures, and interventions via class e-mail list-serv.**

**D) As a background/foreground text please also read:**

***Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* (especially starting at part iv – 1989)**  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/ArtandSocialChange.pdf>

***Art and Multitude* by A. Negri. Polity Press, (2011) – I recommend you get it, as soon as you can. I will be touching on it as we flow along.**

***All the text with rare exception will be offered to class via PDF format.***

September 27<sup>th</sup> – Introduction – *Soylent Green* (film)

October 4<sup>th</sup> – Reading: “The Fragment on Machines” by Karl Marx – *Viva Mexico* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/FragmentonMachines.pdf>

October 11<sup>th</sup> – Reading: *The Birth of Biopolitics* by Michel Foucault (Chapter One) and  
“Neoliberal Governmentality in The Birth of Biopolitics” (Essay) –  
*Blade Runner* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/BirthofBiopolitics.pdf>  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/NeoliberalGovernmentality.pdf>

October 18<sup>th</sup> – Reading: *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* by G. Agamben –  
(Part Three: “The Camp As Biopolitical Paradigm of the Modern”) –  
*Punishment Park* (Film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/HomoSacer.pdf>

October 25<sup>th</sup> – Reading: *Empire* by Negri and Hardt (sections 1.2 and 1.3) – Bring  
in artwork that reflects on or critiques for you the “biopolitics” or the  
“neoliberal.” *Videodrome* – (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/Empire.pdf>

November 1<sup>st</sup> – Reading: *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* by  
Judith Butler – (Part Three: “Indefinite Detention”) – Consider What is  
art in the Age of Terrorism? Offer us artwork that frames our ongoing age  
of indefinite detention? – *The Children of Men* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/PrecariousLife.pdf>

November 8<sup>th</sup> – **NO CLASS** – Reading: *Commonwealth* by Negri and Hardt (Entire  
book) – PDF available – (but you might want to by the book) – *What  
Would it Mean to Win?* (film) –  
[http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/zanny/videos/What\\_would\\_it\\_mean.mp4/view](http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/zanny/videos/What_would_it_mean.mp4/view)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/Commonwealth.pdf>

November 15<sup>th</sup> – Reading: *A Grammar of the Multitude* by Paolo Virno (Entire book) –  
*Sleep Dealer* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/Grammar.pdf>

November 22<sup>nd</sup> – Reading: “*Muerte Sin Fin*: Teresa Margolles's Gendered States of Exception” by Amy Sara Carroll and “Border formations: Security and Subjectivity at the Border” by Robert Latham – *Demon Lover* (Film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/MuerteSinFin.pdf>  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/Borderformations.pdf>

November 29<sup>th</sup> – Reading: “Post-Cinematic Affect: On Grace Jones, *Boarding Gate* and *Southland Tales*” by Steven Shaviro – *Gamer* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/PostCinematicAffect.pdf>

December 6<sup>th</sup> – Reading: “Cognitive Capitalism and Contested Campus” by Nick Dyer-Witherford – *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (film)  
<http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/biopolitics/CognitiveCapitalism.pdf>

December 13<sup>th</sup> - Final Dialogue(s)

**Other Readings - (more will be added as we flow along):**

*The Italian Difference: Between Nihilism and Biopolitics* by editors Lorenzo Chiesa, Alberto Toscano. Re-press, (2009). <http://www.re-press.org>

*Life As Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism in the Neoliberal Era* by Melinda Cooper. Copper Press, (2008).

*Spectacular Capitalism: Guy Debord and the Practice of Radical Philosophy* by Richard Gilman-Opalsky. Minor Compositions, Anti-copyright, (2011).  
<http://www.minorcompositions.info>

*This Is Not a Program* by Tiquun. semiotext(e), (2009).

